

UNM's Lobo Battalion fires up Army Air Power



University of New Mexico cadets and cadre participated in one of their state's biggest attractions this past fall when they launched an Army balloon into the skies over Albuquerque.

Inset left: Cadet Brett Perry (left) and retired Maj. Kevin Knapp wrestle with the ascending balloon.

Inset above: (front to back, left to right) Capt. Jorge Reyes, Cadets Louis Sanchez, Brian Long, Benny Soveranez, Brett Perry, John Brooks, and Lt. Col. Anna Lucero and two others pack the balloon for transport.

By Col. Steven Corbett

Commander, Western Region

My day began today with the news of the passing of Coretta Scott King, widow of the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr.

Mrs King's passing comes less than a month after our nation commemorated Dr. King's birthday. Dr. King's legacy is a vital component in the growth and maturation of America as a nation and we Americans as a people. I've spent the day pondering the role that the United States Army has played in the evolution of civil rights and equality, particularly in the past century and a half.

The victory the Union Armies during the Civil War ensured the destruction of the horrible evil of slavery in our land. After the war, the establishment of the 9th and 10th Cavalry, and the 24th and 25th Infantry Regiments (the "Buffalo Soldiers"), gave Black Americans the opportunity to serve our nation, and



for the next 90 years, the integration of the Armed Forces during the Korean War gave the Army the opportunity to lead the way.

Since then, Soldiers of every race have continuously served, fought and died together as a Band of Brothers, in service to our Nation. Soldiers learned long before many civilians in our country that all men truly are created equal. No one serving today even remembers that it was once "taboo" for black and white soldiers to share a meal, a foxhole,

eventually, to break many of the color barriers that remained in our nation. The first black General Officer in the Army, Brig. Gen. Benjamin O. Davis, began his career as an enlisted "Buffalo Soldier."

Although we continued to segregate our Army

even their blood.

Dr. and Mrs. King both played such pivotal roles in our modern civil rights movement. Less than 50 years ago, our Army was frequently called upon to support the efforts to integrate our schools, public transportation systems, and to protect civil rights marches. It is of great pride to me that, regardless of any individual Soldier's personal beliefs, they obeyed their orders and enforced the will of our government. In the end, children in Little Rock and elsewhere could go to school, ride any bus they chose, and people could assemble to assert their rights as Americans.

All Americans should mourn the passing of this dedicated, courageous woman – as we did the tragic murder of her husband. America is a better, more humane place because of the Kings. They brought us closer to the dream that is America. But we are not done yet, and must work together to share the dream that they shared with our founding fathers, "E Pluribus Unum," out of many – one.

By Command Sergeant Major Victor Mercado

Command Sergeant Major, Western Region

Since joining the Western Region team, I have been greatly impressed by the pride, professionalism, and devotion our officers, noncommissioned officers, cadets, and civilians display. I want to continue meeting our great team and provide observations and feedback through my editorials in the Goldbar Leader.

Though I've only been assigned here a short time, this is what I know:

Western Region is highly respected by our higher HQs and feared by those who stand in our way from accomplishing our mission. We must continue that long-standing tradition.

We are at war on multiple fronts and at many levels. The sole purpose of our Army is to fight and win this war. As I write this article, many of our Soldiers are in a tough place answering our Nation's call.

Now more than ever, our Army needs a rock-solid strong officer and NCO corps. We must focus

on preparing our cadets for their high calling – leading the Soldiers into war. We must train all cadets to be warriors regardless of their commissioning choice. And, while we're at it, we must also provide responsive care to their families and our own.

We must ensure our cadets and units are ready no matter what mission and resources we are given. We must live the U.S. Army Cadet Command motto: *Train to Lead – We Commission!*

This motto is meant to heighten our awareness as we fight the global war on terrorism. Our units -- battalions, brigades, and this headquarters element -- must band together to train and commission officers who can be relied upon to perform missions far outside of the traditional roles of our forces.

The bottom line is that we must adapt to never-ending changes and to make smart training decision with minimum guidance. I look forward to serving with you in this noble effort.



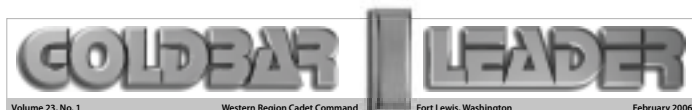
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Col. Steven R. Corbett

Commander

Western Region, U.S Army Cadet Command

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OK cadets collect gifts for local Boys Ranch

Field Report

University of Central Oklahoma

EDMOND, Okla. – The Broncho Battalion collected and distributed Christmas gifts for to residents of the Oklahoma Baptist Boys Ranch Town. The Town provides a home for young boys in need from the ages of 7 – 17.

Located in a rural setting of Edmond, the Boys Ranch program offers family style living in cottages with eight boys each and a married couple serving as house parents.

Broncho Battalion cadets put together an Angel Tree adorned with requests, and each cadet sponsored a young boy, getting Christmas presents for them based on a wish list each boy had made.

Cadet Jack Roach said, “It’s a great way for us to give back to our community and support young men in need.”

Scott Conrad, one of the house dads was able to come to the university to officially accept the gifts on behalf of the Boys Ranch and tell the cadets more about the program.

Cadets traveled to the Boys Ranch to deliver the gifts in person as well as to tour the Ranch and meet some of the boys.

“We got to tour one of the cottages to see how they live,” said Cadet Paul Meece. “They have excellent living conditions and the program offers a great way to help these kids grow up in a caring environment and be a part of the community. It was a real treat, too, for the boys to see people in uniform who cared about them.”

UCO’s Professor of Military Science, Lt. Col. Stuart Jolly, said the event marked a growth step for individual cadets and for the battalion as a team.

“We credit the growth with a new leadership emphasis and University support, along with the quality of cadets coming into our program.”

Army offers ROTC grads careers in science

By Karen Fleming-Michael

U.S. Army Medical Research
and Materiel Command

When it came time to choose their careers, seven women chose science – and the Army. Though many of the women who work in the Walter Reed Army Institute Research’s Division of Experimental Therapeutics are now fully aware of the science opportunities the Army offers, that wasn’t always the case.

Four of the officers, who all hold doctorate degrees in their fields, learned they could parlay their love of science into military careers after accepting ROTC scholarships as undergrads.

“I started ROTC because they let me take repelling and rifle marksmanship as electives my first year in college,” Capt. Mara Kreishman-Deitrick said. “My parents always joked that this is what happens when you don’t let your kids play with guns.”

Thrill-seeking aside, she continued pursuing her education, earning a doctorate in nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy and biochemistry at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas.

Today, she and her fellow Medical Service Corps scientists put their academic degrees to use in finding new drugs to fight malaria and other infectious diseases. Trained in immunology, synthetic organic and medicinal chemistry, genetics, bioanalytical chemistry, molecular biology, biochemistry and microbiology, the scientists ensure the division’s work thrives in combating the infectious diseases that have plagued military campaigns throughout recorded history. For example, malaria, a primary focus in the Division of ET, was the leading disability in Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s and Somalia in 1993.

A military science career offers the opportunity to develop leadership skills, to learn different skills and travel to different continents to get experience in clinical and field malariology.

“We are really brought into the group in terms of where we fit into the program,” said Maj. Karen Kopydlowski, who learned she could combine her love of science with a military career when she completed the Officer Basic Course. “It’s the perfect marriage of science and service.”

She said the chance to conduct research that directly impacts U.S. troops as well as people across the world made an enormous impact on her decision to make the Army her career. Kopydlowski returned to graduate school at the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences and obtained her Ph.D. in microbiology.

Dillard University graduate and Louisiana native Maj. Regina Davey knew one thing: she wanted a better lifestyle, a better education, better healthcare and better finances than she’d grown up with – but she wasn’t sure the Army was for her. After accepting an scholarship, earning a master’s in microbiology, working toward her doctorate in microbiology and traveling to Japan, Thailand and Bangladesh, she has

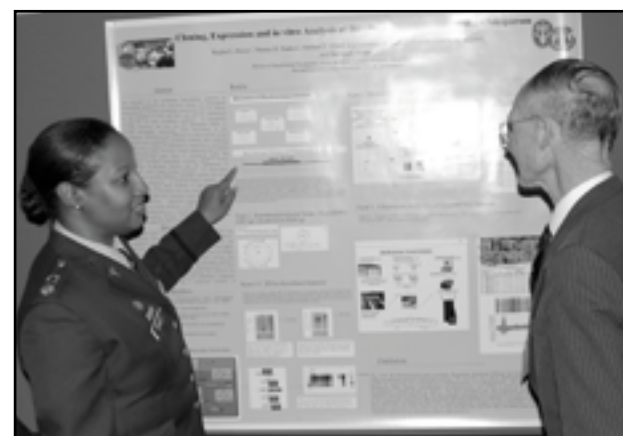


Photo courtesy WRAIR

Maj. Regina Davey (left) explains her research to an attendee at the American Society for Tropical Medicine and Hygiene Conference in Washington. Davey works with six other women in the Division of Experimental Therapeutics at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research. The division is striking because of the number of women officers who hold doctorates and serve as primary investigators in research studies.

no doubt she made the right decision.

“The Army has exceeded my expectations and has provided wonderful opportunities while advancing my leadership and scientific abilities. The Army has made me better both personally and professionally,” Davey said.

The military wasn’t completely foreign to Capt. Jeanne Geyer, who received an ROTC scholarship while an undergraduate at Wofford College in South Carolina. Her grandfather, uncles, father, sister and cousins served in every branch of the service, officer and enlisted, so putting on a uniform seemed natural, she said.

“My cousin even played drums in the Marine Corps Marching Band,” said Geyer, who earned her doctorate in genetics and molecular biology from Emory University in Atlanta and was then assigned to WRAIR. There, Geyer worked on a program that identifies candidate antimalarial compounds and studied why some antimalarials drugs stop working.

“I always knew I wanted to be a scientist, but fulfilling this goal while in uniform has been much more rewarding than I ever could have imagined,” she said.

Direct commissions were the route taken by Captains Jian Guan, Kirsten Smith and Tiffany Heady. Guan, a graduate of the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, and Smith and Heady, University of Virginia alumni, joined the team after earning their doctorates.

Smith, whose husband is Army, has had the chance to live overseas and experience Army life.

“After a while, I thought I’d really like to join the Army, too – for professional and leadership development and to give back to my country,” she said.

The challenges faced by career military scientists can look much like opportunities. “We are asked to perform at a different level,” said Kopydlowski, a four-year veteran of the ET division and mentor to many new officers.

MSU cadet gets kicks as starting goalkeeper

Maj. Rod Williams
Missouri State University

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. – Perseverance is a word that has become increasingly familiar to Cadet Nathan Platz over the past year. Entering his MS IV year at Missouri State University (formerly Southwest Missouri State), the native of Coralville, Iowa, believed that his days of college soccer were behind him.



Platz

Platz, a standout goalkeeper at Iowa City West High School, played an integral part in that school's back-to-back-to-back conference championships.

He arrived at Missouri State and spent the first couple of seasons backing up All-Conference goalkeeper Matt Pickens, who now plays for the MLS Chicago Fire.

It was during this time of hard work but little playing time that Platz was introduced to the ROTC by another member of the soccer team. He then began the arduous task of participating in ROTC and playing soccer.

Platz entered the 2004-2005 school year facing the most demanding time he would see at Missouri State. He became the starting goalkeeper on a team with high expectations in the Missouri Valley Conference and an MS III cadet facing "crunch time" before Warrior Forge 2005. Platz provided outstanding goalkeeping through the season, compiling a 10-5-2 record and an impressive 1.07 goals-against average. He ended what he assumed was his final year, by splitting time in goal with the backup goalie.

"The coach felt that I had lost some of my focus," Platz admitted, "and he may have been right."

That left him to focus solely on a strenuous summer that would include Warrior Forge and leadership training with an Armor unit in Korea. With renewed focus, Platz managed an outstanding performance and came home with a fresh commitment to becoming a combat arms officer.

But it seemed that the soccer coach wasn't through with Platz. He asked Platz if he would be willing to play again during the 2005-2006 season. Platz responded with his usual competitive manner.

"I will come out again only if I can compete for the starting position. I don't want to be the assumed backup goalie."

His hard work and perseverance has paid off so far. Platz won the starting job and as of mid-September, he had compiled a 3-0-1 record with two shutouts and a 0.46 goals-against average. His shutout streak was at 252 minutes.

"I really discovered how much better things are when you don't place too much pressure on yourself and just give it all you've got."



Courtesy photo

Army ROTC cadets from Prairie View A&M University greet 1st Cavalry Division company-grade officers from the 2nd "Black Jack" Brigade Combat Team during their Dining In event Dec. 2. Three First Team officers were guest speakers at the ROTC event.

CGOs share with cadets at Dining In

Field Report

Prairie View A&M University

PRAIRIE VIEW, Texas – Three 1st Cavalry Division officers from the 2nd "Black Jack" Brigade Combat Team addressed some future members of the officer corps at the Prairie View A&M "Panther" Reserve Officers' Training Corps battalion dining-in Dec. 2.

Professor of Military Science Lt. Col. Carol Strong requested, in place of a traditional senior field grade guest speaker, a panel of company grade officers to speak to her students.

The concept was that students, ranging from freshmen, brand new to the program, to seniors, who will receive their commissions this spring, would be able to more closely relate to a group of lieutenants and captains.

The volunteer panel consisted of a representative from combat arms, combat support and combat service support branches.

The speakers were Capt. Latisha Wayne, an intelligence officer with 2nd BCT, Capt. Onwe Ivory, who served as an executive officer for a forward support company during Operation Iraqi Freedom II, and 1st Lt. Chris Dunn, who served

as an armor platoon leader during the brigade's deployment to Iraq.

Following dinner and many highly entertaining points of order, each panelist gave a 10-minute speech on their experiences of transitioning from the life of an ROTC cadet to active-duty officer.

Wayne spoke not only of her transition from college student to lieutenant, but also imparted upon the cadets the importance of finding a sponsor upon arrival to their new unit.

Ivory followed, emphasizing the importance of being a confident leader, proficient in all the Soldier tasks and basic skills. He highlighted his point with several stories of patrols he led during his recent deployment.

Dunn was the final speaker. As a former platoon leader, he emphasized the importance of the creating a team between the platoon leader and the platoon sergeant.

The common thread throughout all three speeches was the importance of learning as much as possible upon arrival at the unit, and the emphasis of the greatest resource available to a newly commissioned officer: the noncommissioned officer.

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Grizzlies brave wet weekend to get their practice on

Field Report

University of Montana

MISSOULA, Mont. – The Grizzly Battalion held its Fall Field Training Exercise at Lubrecht Experimental Forest this past fall. The weekend's exercises were designed to build team cohesion and train cadets for the advanced summer training exercise at Fort Lewis.

As cadets awoke early on a Saturday, the steady rain reflected the weekend's forecast: cold and wet.

"These conditions make training even more challenging, which will make us better soldiers," MSII Cadet Sean Conlon said. Training started Saturday morning with FLRC and LRC lanes. Cadets are challenged with negotiating obstacles using various supplies, situations, and rules.

"The ability of my squad to stay motivated despite being wet and cold motivated me as well," said MSIV lane evaluator Tom Figarelle. "I feel that my squad really started to gel as a team so this was a great way to start the school year."

After the team-building exercises, cadets completed the daylight phase of the Land Navigation course, with the night portion to follow later that evening. Armed with a map, protractor, pen, and compass, cadets use their land navigation skills to find marked points within the forest. Each designated point is a tree marked with a metal tag with a code on it, and either a ring of blue paint, or a glowing chem-light, depending on the time of day. When cadets find a point, they record the code and move on to find the next point. The

codes are verified when they complete the course to determine if they found the correct point or not.

"It is wet and slippery," said MSIV Caleb Oman. "There is dense vegetation and the varying topography adds an extra challenge."

Cadets Wade Morrison and Tom Allen, MSIVs, sat warm and dry in the Tactical Operations Center updating charts and receiving and sending out various transmissions over the radio.

"We all spent lots of time preparing the training for this FTX, and now we are managing everything that is going on," Allen said. "This should really help us as second lieutenants."

As the light faded, cadets gathered around a large terrain model on the ground, showing the night Land Navigation course. After a short briefing, the maps and test sheets indicating specific points each cadet must find were handed out, and the cadets dispersed to test their skills. Cadet Emily Gerding was responsible for assisting cadets who stumbled across her attack point, which was a reference guide so cadets could re-orient themselves to their maps.

"I really enjoy helping the younger cadets with their training and professional Army development," Gerding said. "Manning this attack point allows me to do that on a technical level."

Lights finally went out at 2 a.m., only to turn on again at 5.

"We were all pretty groggy this morning, but this IMT class requires us to move with a purpose," Cadet Dan DeCoite said. "I think everybody's blood is flowing pretty good now, so we all should be awake."

Rolling Thunder battalion starts cadets at the top

By Cadet John Castlen
Wheaton College

WHEATON, Ill. – Newcomers to the Rolling Thunder battalion get a unique welcome into the ROTC program: the freshmen have to jump off a 34-foot tower.

At the beginning of every fall semester, the Rolling Thunder Battalion, which consists of host school Wheaton College, Olivet Nazarene University, and other smaller schools in the area, takes its new cadets on a trip to Fort McCoy, Wisconsin, as a part of the freshman orientation process.

The trip is designed to quickly incorporate the freshman into ROTC, give them a better look at the Army, and to have an exciting time. MSII, III, and IVs are also encouraged to attend the weekend event to help run the trip and, more importantly, to get to know the new cadets.

The freshman weekend experience

has a profound effect on the new cadets' orientation to ROTC.

Lt. Col. Benjamin White, the battalion's Commander, said the weekend gives the new cadets a personal experience of what the Army is like.

"For many, it may be the first time they slept in a barracks," White said. "Those kinds of small experiences help the cadets realize what they are getting into, and consequently, they have fewer unknowns about being a cadet and being in the Army."

The Freshman Weekend is one reason the Rolling Thunder battalion has the second highest retention rate in the brigade, White said.

Mark Witte, a new MS I, said the weekend was a "good introduction into the military way of life."

"Staying in a barracks overnight was a new experience for me," Witte said. "I thought it was good to get more accustomed to what life was like in the military."

2nd Louie

By Bob Rosenburgh



HUFFMAN, Texas – Cadets and cadre at Hargrave HS in December completed work on a climbing wall and are now climbing to new heights. Cadets Travis Jarrell (center) and Scott Errichetto (left) head to the top, while Cadets Gregory Langdon and Blake Barnes are on belay. Located opposite a rappelling tower, the wall has a climbing surface height of 25 feet, plus 330 separate sites to attach hand/foot holds. Cadets raised money and solicited corporations to donate materials so the cadets could then construct the facilities themselves. Cadets develop self-confidence, trust in their equipment and fellow cadets, and team-building skills utilizing the different facilities.



FARMINGTON, N.M. – “Victim” Mike O’Neill is carried over an obstacle by litter bearers Josh Lucas (left) and Landon Bydonie. In just two years the Panther Battalion of Piedra Vista HS transformed a dirt lot into the premier training location in the community. The cadets had a vision: to build a challenging confidence course geared toward the development of teamwork and individual skills. With the generous support of local merchants, numerous fundraisers and the hard work of the cadre and cadets the confidence course is now complete. Confidence obstacles built by the cadre and cadets include inclined wall, reverse climb, rope bridge site, tunnel, rope climb, parallel bars and the weaver. Not only do the cadets benefit from the training, but the football team, student senate, Farmington Police Department and the Youth Conservation Corps have all enjoyed the experience.



KANSAS CITY – Despite Roashonda Barner’s house burning in a fire that killed her uncle and destroyed the family’s belongings, she has managed to maintain her role as Lincoln College Prep Academy’s cadet commander. And this year she was selected as a candidate in an All-City competition to help provide leadership for the Kansas City Corps of Cadets. She continues to take five International Baccalaureate classes and maintains a 3.86 GPA in a challenging college prep curriculum.

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. – The Emmerich Manual HS battalion staff marched in the local Veterans Day Parade Nov. 11. Pictured are: John Heifner (front), Dennis Creek, Samuel Morris, Michael Starr. Felicia Garza, the battalion S-2 (not pictured) was also present. The battalion is formed up behind the staff group.



WILSON, Ark. – Twenty-two Rivercrest HS JROTC cadets and the Hospital Occupational Specialties Association (HOSA) participated in the American Red Cross MASH BASH blood drive on Jan. 6. The event replenishes blood supplies which are near crisis level in the Northeast Arkansas area. The JROTC cadets welcomed individuals to the event, escorted donors and prepared and served food and beverages to Red Cross workers, volunteers and donors during a nine hour shift. This is the seventh year in which JROTC has provided cadets the opportunity to earn public service points and to assist the community in meeting essential blood requirements. The following students attended the event: Alyssa Bennett, Charles Campbell, Samantha Clay, Shalesa Davis, Emily Duck, Jackie Faulkner, Chelsea Field, Heather Franks, Christina Gaston, Melinda Hayes, Paige Horton, Brittany Martin, Akila Nash, Deanna Rackley, Aislynn Reece, Meghan Saint, Jessica Saint, Hunter Vandergriff, Whitney Vaughn, Sylvia Ware, Patrick Warren and Kaysi Winford.



J R O T C N E W S

West Florida cadets paint realism into training

By Bob Rosenburgh

Western Region Public Affairs

Since an Army officer needs the flexibility to adapt the tools at hand to mission requirements, the Army ROTC cadets at University of West Florida have shown their adaptability in a unique and very interesting way. Lacking the funds for such high tech training devices as the Army's MILES laser engagement system, they have instead found a realistic, yet inexpensive substitute – Paintball.

"We use the paintball guns at our FTX (Field Training Exercise) and also for our STX (Situational Training Exercise) lanes," said Cadet Sean J. Reeves, acting Battalion commander and a member of the Argonaut Battalion's training staff. "We use it to enhance the realism of our training instead of going out with the 'rubberduck' M-16s and going bang, bang, bang." He said the use of harmless projectiles ensures that cadets learn to keep their heads down, use proper cover and concealment and plan their movements well. "You can hear it, you can see it and there is effective noise from the paint markers firing. It adds the effect of realism"

Reeves explained that the paintball guns were purchased initially for STX and Labs (Military Science) on campus, but their success in those venues led them to additionally employ Paintball in the Fall FTXs.

The on-campus STX training was conducted in one of the many nearby wooded areas at West Florida University.

"Our FTXs are conducted at Camp Shelby, Mississippi," said Reeves, "and we go through their Range Control to use a training area." The on-campus lanes are in preparation for the FTX. To facilitate training on the college grounds, they have a series of bunkers and obstacles that can be set up for the mission, and then removed afterwards so joggers and bikers aren't inconvenienced.

Reeves said all the lanes training is conducted as force-on-force exercises.

"All of our Recon, Patrolling, Ambush ... everything we do ... has an OPFOR (Opposing Forces) usually made up of cadre members and everyone has a paintball gun. So if you're in the exercise and you get compromised, you will get shot at." In a typical scenario, the cadets arrive in full combat regalia and are given their mission by an evaluator. They then set up their assembly area or patrol base and prepare an operational order, go through some rehearsals and pre-combat checks, then call their headquarters and request permission to cross the line of departure.

That's when the action begins.

"All their weapons are on safe until they make contact," Reeves explained, "just like if they had an M-4 Carbine or an M-16A2 with live rounds in it." As soon as they encounter their opponents, however, all weapons go hot and the paintballs fly. "Upon making contact, there is a lot of excitement," he

continued. "You can see it in their faces and hear it in their voices." He laughed and said a cadet's first time with the Paintball training can be something less than military precision. "They kind of forget what they're doing because it's so much fun and it can be kind of a problem at first." Soon, however ... and with robust "coaching" from the cadre, their attention is focused back on the tactics and teamwork needed on the real battlefield.



Courtesy photo

UWF Cadets Joshua Brown, Aaron Radford, Samuel Siegal, and Trent Tillman (l-r) were given the chance recently to play Opposing Forces during training.

"The more these squads work together, the less they lose their focus on the mission tasks," Reeves said. They also can focus on the conduct of the fire team, correcting actions like crossing into the lines of fire of their comrades and becoming a casualty of Fratricide. "It's incumbent on everyone to have both Situational Awareness and Muzzle Discipline."

The meat of the training is when they move onto the objective or encounter an ambush and a firefight ensues, but it's also the high point of the day as a well-executed Op-Order achieves the mission objective and they are victorious ... or not ... and they are defeated in detail by the OPFOR.

Paintball brings a degree of realism to the small-unit actions that can be sobering to those training for real war.

"You know when you get hit," said Reeves, "and usually you say something like, 'I'm hit, I'm hit.' The evaluator will look to see if it's a flesh wound, a crippling injury or if you are simply dead." These faux injuries play into the mission scenario because a minor injury may mean the player is still in the game or a serious wound may mean they need to radio for a Medevac chopper. Or the player is out altogether. Sometimes, a "technical" casualty is used for training purposes.

"If someone is not utilizing cover properly, or is just out in the open and not following orders, the evaluator may decide to just declare them dead or wounded by shrapnel or a stray shot, just to make a point," Reeves noted. "The paintballs tend to explode when they hit branches, unlike a real bullet that would cut through

or even ricochet, so even a technical kill has an element of the real world to it."

Sometimes the OPFOR is made up of underclassmen, MS I's and II's who haven't experienced the level of training the upperclassmen have.

"We put them in there and they get real excited and it's like cowboys and Indians as they run around like untrained indigenous personnel, doing whatever they want." As soldiers and officers, the cadets may one day face disorganized opponents, so it's yet another training element.

Reeves noted how they were able to incorporate a variety of battlefield tasks into the use of these surrogate weapons, tasks that went beyond simple engagement realism.

"One of the problems we had with these guns was that the magazine hoppers had a tendency to pop off, so we worked out a way to hold them down with heavy rubber bands." Problem solving ... a dimension of leadership skills. They also learned to identify other problems and compensate, like when frozen O-rings on CO2 canisters would turn brittle and break, or leaks appeared on hoses and fittings. "We'd use a putty-type sealant on the threads and continue the fight."


They even developed a standard maintenance kit for each cadet to carry into "battle," and be ready for any eventuality. It also taught them to keep their equipment in working order. "If anyone had any issues with their weapons," he said, "we'd go through and clean out the barrels, change tanks, reload and so on."

Although the paintballs guns aren't what they'd use in real combat, the cadets were exposed to leadership tasks like adaptability, pre-mission checks, corrective measures, and equipment maintenance and field expediences, all at the squad level. But there are tactical lessons as well.

"I was an evaluator on our last FTX," said Reeves, "and I found that one of our biggest problems was accidental discharges." As with any weapon, they learned the importance of muzzle discipline and the possibility of weapons malfunctions in relation to Friendly Fire casualties.

"Another thing that happened in my lane was when the cadets would re-adjust the gas settings to speed up the paintball. That can hurt." He recalled one such gun that hit another cadet's gun in the hopper with so much force it exploded all the paintballs in the gun and came through the other side. "That was a big safety issue and we had to tighten up the safety discipline, too." All the cadets are equipped with head and eye protection.

Paintball has seen wide acceptance throughout the military, both as a training aid and as a sport. Most major bases have a Paintball range that can be scheduled for unit training. It provides an affordable yet extremely realistic way to exercise Soldiers in the fundamentals of small unit actions, teamwork and a wide range of tactical scenarios.



This is the bar of a Second Lieutenant.
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